

It has been talked about since the very beginning of our republic and even came within one vote of being adopted by Congress just over 15 years ago. It has proven to be so important a tool for responsible governance that 49 of the 50 states have chosen to abide by its principles. Yet, today, when it is needed most, our federal government still does not have a Balanced Budget Amendment.

The current national debt of 14.9 trillion dollars is such a gargantuan figure that perhaps only cosmologists – those who regularly contemplate the colossal size of the universe – have an appreciation for its sheer enormity. Even more sobering is the rate at which the national debt has grown in recent years. Just over the past two and a half years, the debt has increased by \$3.7 trillion; an amount equal to all the U.S. government debt accumulated from the year 1776 to 1992.

Concern over government overspending and borrowing may seem like a new issue, but it isn't. Even Thomas Jefferson expressed reservations over government borrowing before he took the office of president. Over 190 years later, President Ronald Reagan, lamenting a lack of spending restraint, called for action. "Only a constitutional amendment will do the job. We've tried the carrot, and it failed. With the stick of a Balanced Budget Amendment, we can stop government squandering, overtaxing ways, and save our economy."

Our monumental national debt is not the work of one political party or president, but rather the culmination of decades of overspending without proper restraint. It will therefore take bipartisan support to enact real spending control in the form of a Balanced Budget Amendment. In 1996 Congress actually came close to finally passing a Balanced Budget Amendment. It cleared the House with bipartisan backing only to fall short in the Senate by a single vote. Since that time, the national debt has skyrocketed by over \$9 trillion.

In the coming weeks, Congress will once again have the opportunity to vote on a Balanced Budget Amendment. As part of the Budget Control Act, which passed the House in early August, an agreement was reached that both the House and Senate would hold separate votes on a Balanced Budget Amendment between October 1 and December 31, 2011.

But merely passing a balanced budget requirement is not enough. What is needed is an effective and fiscally responsible Balanced Budget Amendment that will not allow Congress to

balance the budget simply by increasing taxes. Taxpayers should not be punished for lawmakers' overspending. Accordingly, a proper Balanced Budget Amendment should ensure that government lives within its means through spending restraint.

The root cause of the debt dilemma facing our country stems from government overspending, not from under-taxation of the American people. Meanwhile, the president continues to insist that record tax increases are necessary in order to ensure everyone pays "their fair share." His approach would punish many more Americans than the small fraction of super-rich he demagogues against. Many small business owners who contribute the most to local hiring would also be burdened with higher taxes.

After meeting with a number of small and medium sized employers across south Alabama in recent weeks, it is apparent they do not share the opinion that taxes are not high enough.

Meanwhile, if the George Soros' and Warren Buffett's of the world believe they are not paying their fair share, they are more than welcome to write a generous check to the U.S. Bureau of Public Debt, Attn: Dept. G, Bureau of Public Debt, P.O. Box 2188, Parkersburg, WV 26106-2188.

### **Visiting Our Troops in Afghanistan:**

As this column goes to press I am returning from visiting our military commanders and men and women in uniform serving in Afghanistan.

Since I am writing this note in advance of my trip, I am not yet able to talk about the details of my meetings, but I can tell you that my schedule includes a stop in the Afghan capital of Kabul as well as visits to outlying provinces where many U.S. military are currently stationed.

This will be my third trip to Afghanistan to review the progress of our military in countering the Taliban and Al Qaeda insurgents in that South Asian nation.

I am looking forward to seeing first hand the conditions under which our military are fighting and speaking with them about the challenges they continue to face. I will report back to you next week on what I learn.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721 or visit my website at <http://bonner.house.gov> .

For release: November 14, 2011